

No. 57. Mrs. G. Catt.

BARHAM TRACTS.

No. IX.

HOW SHALL I SPEND PASSION WEEK?

BY THE
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PASSION WEEK.

The word “Passion” commonly means anger; but it also means *Suffering*. Thus, in the Litany, we pray, “By thy cross and *passion*, good Lord, deliver us;” that is to say, “by thy cross and *suffering*.” This is the reason why that solemn week, in which our blessed Lord suffered so much for us, is called, “Passion Week.”

Now I know, there is many a Poor Person who is ready to ask, “How shall I spend this week in a profitable manner?” Let me then try to give you a little help. I shall bring before you on each day a suitable passage of Scripture; and thus enable you to meditate on some event of our Lord’s history, which happened on that particular day. A few simple remarks will be added to each passage.

Remember, you are not to read the whole tract at once, and then put it by. But save each portion for the appointed day, when it arrives. Read it very seriously, and with a sincere prayer that God the Holy Spirit may teach you, and bring it home to your hearts.

A PRAYER FOR PASSION WEEK.

Blessed Lord, look down from Heaven upon me thy sinful creature; and give me at this time a very serious and humble mind.

Make this to be a season of much blessing to my soul. I desire to draw myself away from the world for a time, and to fix my thoughts more entirely on Thee. May thine agony and bloody sweat, thy cross and passion, thy precious death and burial, be now brought specially before my mind.

O my Saviour, how great was thy love, in dying for us sinners on the cross! Thou knowest how little I have loved Thee, and how cold and dull my heart is. Be pleased to quicken it, and put some feeling into it. May I look upon Thee, whom I have pierced, and mourn for my many sins. May the thoughts of thy love bring me to repentance. May thy blood wash away my guilt. May I be clothed in thy righteousness. May thy Holy Spirit renew and change my heart. Oh that I may hate sin, and give myself more entirely to thy service. Hear me, and bless me, for thy mercy's sake. *Amen.*

PALM SUNDAY ; OR, THE SUNDAY BEFORE EASTER.

JOHN XII. 12—16.

“On the next day, much people that were come to the Feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon ; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion : behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.”

The time of our Lord’s sojourn upon earth was now drawing to a close. He had come from heaven to seek and to save the lost, and especially “the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” But they, from the first, despised and rejected him, saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” And yet we see him here entering the city of Jerusalem, amidst the shouts and cheers of the people ! He had lately been raising Lazarus from the grave (John xi.); and perhaps it was on this account that, for a while, they paid him so

much respect. But this change in them only lasted for a little moment. These very people, it may be, who now strewed palm branches before him, and greeted him with joyful Hosannas, in a few days uttered the savage cry, “Crucify him, crucify him!”

Oh, what is the heart of man? Is it not “unstable as water?” And what is *my* heart? How changing and uncertain is it! One moment, it is warm with love to Christ; at another moment, it is cold toward him. One day, I am willing to serve him, and to acknowledge him as my Master; the next, I am ready to crucify him with my sins. How different is His love to me! He hath loved me with an everlasting, unchanging love.

May God give me grace to surrender my heart, my will, my affections, all to Christ; and to take him as my eternal portion. Oh that God may pour out upon me his Holy Spirit, that I may look upon him whom I have pierced, and mourn. Oh that I may crucify those sins, which have so often “crucified Him afresh;” and endeavour henceforth to love him, who suffered so much for me!

MONDAY BEFORE EASTER.

MARK XI. 12—19.

“ And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon. And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered, and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. And they came to Jerusalem, and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him.”

Jesus had spent the night at Bethany, a quiet little village near Jerusalem. In the morning, on their way to the city, he passed a fig-tree. He noticed that it was covered with leaves. This was not usual; “ for the time of figs was not yet.” On coming near to it, however, he found that it bore no fruit.* There were plenty of leaves, but nothing more. Upon this, he pronounced his curse

* The fig-tree generally produces leaves and fruit at the same time.

upon the tree ; and it withered away. What a lesson to the Jews ! They made a great outward profession of godliness, but they were unfruitful ; and God was soon going to wither the whole nation. And what a lesson to *me* ! I am a Christian by profession ; but how little fruit am I bearing ! Most justly indeed do I deserve to perish, under the withering anger of my God !

When our Lord reached the town, he went to the temple ; and there he saw a number of persons buying and selling in the house of God. We are ready enough to cry out against these profane Jews ; but are we so much better than they ? We should be shocked at the very idea of setting up a stall, or pulling out our money, in God's house ; but do we not often carry the world *in our hearts*, when we go there ? Are not our shops, and our employments, uppermost in our minds ? O Lord, cast these sinful thoughts out of us, and make thy house really " a house of prayer " to us !

We read that some of the Rulers were so angry, that they tried to seize our Lord. Little did they know that he, whom they hated, was their best Friend. But their eyes were so blinded, that they could see no beauty in Jesus that they should desire him. No, no more shall I, unless God gives me a believing and loving heart.

TUESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

MATTHEW XXVI. 1—13.

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. Now, when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman, having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he sat at meat. And when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, For what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured the ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.”

Our Lord now plainly tells his disciples that his crucifixion is at hand. Observe, how calmly he speaks of it. He came to do his Father’s will. He came to die, that we might live through him. And whilst the

people are consulting together to take him, and kill him, he is only thinking of our welfare and salvation !

Jesus had gone back to Bethany ; and was in the house of one Simon. Whilst there, a touching circumstance takes place. A woman comes into the room, with a box of sweet-smelling ointment in her hand ; and immediately begins to pour some of it upon the Saviour's head. Who can tell what was passing in that woman's heart ? Perhaps she was poor, and could ill afford it. Perhaps she had found in Jesus such a Friend as her soul needed. Perhaps she had heard from him the welcome tidings of pardon and peace. Evidently she loved much ; and this was the proof she gave. From some she gets a rebuke ; but Jesus receives her gift with kindness. He needed not the ointment ; but he valued it as a token of her affection. He thought, too, of his approaching death, and felt as though she had come (without knowing it) to anoint his body for the burial.

Blessed Saviour, warm my cold heart. I have nothing to bestow on thee, but all to receive. All I can give thee is myself !

WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

JOHN XII. 20—32.

“ And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again. The people therefore that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

This was the day, on which the feast of the Passover began. Many who crowded to that feast wished to see Jesus, out of mere curiosity; they had heard so much about

him. But there were a few, whose hearts throbbed with a secret feeling of love towards him. May we thus desire to behold the Saviour with the eye of faith !

Observe, how Jesus speaks of his approaching sufferings ; “The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.” He was going to die, as a common criminal, the most cruel and disgraceful death; and yet he speaks of being “glorified!” Truly his death was most glorious; for by it he saved a world of sinners.

And yet how bitter were his sufferings ! It was not *bodily* pain that he dreaded. It was the dreadful weight of sin, which pressed upon his *soul*. Yes, blessed Saviour, it was sin—it was *my* sin—that made thee exclaim, “Now is my soul troubled,” &c. The nails tore thy flesh. The spear wounded thy side. But it was sin that pierced thy *soul*. Henceforth may I hate sin with a perfect hatred ; and may thy precious blood wipe away its stain from my soul !

Christ has been “lifted up.” And has not many a poor sinner been drawn to him ? Saviour, lead me to thy cross at this holy season ; and there may I find pardon and peace !

THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER.

MARK XIV. 17—24, 32—36.

“ And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man, if he had never been born. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

“ And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and said unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.”

Let us imagine, for a few moments, our Lord seated at the Passover table with his

twelve disciples. How great must have been their astonishment, when he announced to them the awful fact, that one of them should turn against him ! “ One of *you* which eateth with me shall betray me.” Well might they look at one another, and ask, “ Is it I ? ” They do not say, Is it Peter? or, is it Judas? but, Is it I ? Each one was disposed to suspect himself, rather than his brother. And are we as backward to condemn others, and as ready to suspect ourselves ? Who is there that is not ready to cry out against the traitor Judas ; but have not *we* oftentimes been traitors to our Lord ?

And now let us follow Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane. And what do we behold there ? The spotless Son of God in an agony, sweating large drops of blood ! Who can think of this, and yet remain unmoved ? Who can think of it, and still love his sins ? Who can think of it, and not long to love Jesus with his whole heart ? Lord, increase my faith. Soften my hard heart. Draw me to thyself. So that I may love the world and sin no more ; but take Thee for my blessed and eternal portion !

GOOD FRIDAY.

JOHN XIX. 1—6, 16—18.

“ Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews ! and they smote him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man ! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him ! Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha : where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.”

What a solemn and important day is this ! It was on this day that my Saviour died ; the Lamb of God was sacrificed to take away sin ; the good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. On this day the most precious blood that ever flowed, was shed for me ! Oh that my mind may at this time be

filled with a hatred of sin, and with a fervent love to my Redeemer !

We now behold Jesus brought as a prisoner before Pilate. His enemies revile him in every way ; and yet we see nothing but meekness, patience, and calmness in this holy Sufferer. The Judge himself declares him to be innocent ; and yet they cry, “Crucify him, crucify him !” Oh how desperately wicked is the heart of man ! “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” And if *we* feel towards Him differently from these wicked Jews ; if we are now looking upon Christ as our dearest Friend ; if he is unspeakably precious to our souls ; let us heartily thank God for giving us these feelings, and let us pray that they may be deepened and strengthened within us. God grant that my thoughts to-day may dwell much on my suffering, dying Lord ! May my faith be fixed on that cross, from whence come all my brightest hopes ! And may I, again and again, wash my guilty soul in that precious fountain, which was on this day opened for sin and uncleanness !

EASTER EVE.

MATTHEW XXVII. 62—66.

“ Now the next day that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate saith unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”

This was the day on which the body of our Lord lay in the cold grave. What a day of sadness for his poor mourning disciples! They had lost their beloved Master. If we could have gone to his tomb, we should have found there Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, and a few more of his faithful followers, sitting near the sepulchre. No doubt they felt a peaceful calmness, as they talked over what had happened, and brought to mind some of his gracious promises; such, for instance, as those contained in John xiv., xv., and xvi.

But what were the Chief Priests, and the Pharisees, and Pilate doing? They were not idle. They remembered that Jesus had been heard to say, "After three days I will rise again." For fear, then, that his disciples should steal away his body, and then pretend that his words had come true, they take every precaution. But how feeble was that guard of soldiers, and the stone, and the seal, compared with the power of Christ! He had said (John x.), "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again;" and who could hinder him? Not even the grave could keep him long a prisoner.

And now there is a question or two, which we may well ask ourselves. Am I dead with Christ, dead indeed unto sin? Am I buried with Him? Is the world crucified unto me, and I unto the world? Let this be a day of inward heart-searchings. Let us examine ourselves, and be humbled before God. This will be the best preparation for the happy, joyous feelings, which to-morrow is meant to bring to us.

EASTER DAY.

LUKE XXIV. 1—9.

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest."

What a happy morning was this to our Lord's disciples! and what a happy morning for us! There has been much in the past week to make us sad. To-day we are called upon to rejoice. On Friday we spoke of a dying Sufferer: to-day we may speak of a risen, and ever-living Saviour.

Early on this morning, the two faithful Marys, and some other pious women, went to

the sepulchre to mourn, as they had done the day before. But what must have been their surprise to find the stone rolled away, and their beloved Master gone! Where was he? Who could give them any tidings of him? God would not let them remain long in ignorance. He sent two angels to tell them the joyful news, that Jesus was alive: “He is not here, but is risen.” No wonder they hurried off so quickly to make known this welcome event to the eleven apostles. At first, they could not persuade them. The event was too good to be true; and they believed not for joy, till they beheld him with their very eyes. How is it with *us*? We cannot see our Lord. But blessed are we, if, by God’s grace, we are able to look in faith to an unseen Saviour. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

It is a glorious thought, that Jesus died for our sins; but still more glorious, that he is risen for our justification. It is blessed to know, that he now sits at the right hand of God as our Advocate! but more blessed still that we shall one day be with him, to share his glory!

WORKS BY THE REV. ASHTON OXENDEN.

BARHAM TRACTS.

No.	d.	No.	d.
1. The Bible.....	1	17. I am deaf, and therefore do not go to church ..	1
2. Prayer	1	18. The Prayer which many use, and but few understand	1
3. Public Prayer	1	19. Old John ; or, the Bible with a large print ..	1
4. Family Prayer.....	1	20. Is my state a safe one ?	1
5. Cottage Family Prayers	2	21. Poor Sarah	1
Ditto, in covers	3	22. The Holy Spirit	1
6. The Sinner and the Sa- viour	1	23. A Happy New Year ..	1
7. Are you Happy ?	1	24. A Word or two about Lent.....	1
8. Are you Ready?.....	1	25. How shall I spend Whit-suntide ?	1
9. Passion Week	2	26. Private Prayers for Cot- tagers	1
10. Baptism ; or, What is the good of being christened?.....	1	27. How shall I spend To- day ?	1
11. The Lord's Supper ; or, Who are the welcome Guests ?	1	28. What shall I do this Michaelmas ?	1
12. My duty to my Child..	1	29. The Fatal Railway Ac- cident	1
13. How shall I spend Sun- day ?	1		
14. The Season of Sickness	1		
15. The Great Journey....	1		
16. How shall I spend Christmas ?.....	1		

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